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SONNETS AND POEMS

William Ellery Leonard



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SONNETS AND POEMS

BY

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

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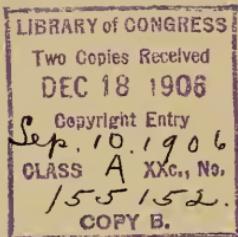
The Heavens and the Earth, and all that is between
them, think ye we have created them in jest!

—THE KORAN



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

1906



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Dedication

*Ye gave me life and will for life to crave:
Desires for mighty suns, or high, or low,
For moons mysterious over cliffs of snow;
For the wild foam upon the midsea wave;
Swift joy in freeman, swift contempt for slave;
Thought which would bind and name the stars and know;
Passion that chastened in mine overthrow;
And speech, to justify my life, ye gave.*

*Life of my life, this late return of song
I give to you before the close of day;
Life of your life! which everlasting wrong
Shall have no power to baffle or betray,
O father, mother! — for ye watched so long,
Ye loved so long, and I was far away.*

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NOTE

This booklet is printed for friends and others interested in such things. Acknowledgments are due to the *Atlantic Monthly* for the privilege of reprinting "New York in Sunset," "With the Age," and "For a Drudger."

W. E. L.

SONNETS AND POEMS

ANTI-ROCOCO

I WOULD make mention of primeval things,
Oceans, horizons, rains, and winds that bear
Moist seeds from isle to isle, caves, mountain air
And echoes, clouds and shadows of their wings
On lakes or hillsides, autumns after springs
In starlight, sleep and breathing and the blare
Of life's reveille, love, birth, death and care
Of sunken graves of peasants as of kings,

The wide world over,—

O be bold, be free!

Strip off this perfumed fabric from your verse,
Tear from your windows all the silk and lace! —
And stand, man, woman, on the slope by me,
O once again before the universe,
O once again with Nature face to face!

Sonnets and Poems

THE WINDWARD SLOPE

COME! — let us live upon the windward slope!
Come! — let us look, magnanimous and free!
Come! — where the sunshine gilds eternity!
Come! — where the lightning has primeval scope!
Come from the caverns of your sordid hope,
Your meagre thought, ye pallid folk, with me!
Come! — where the mountains neighbor on the sea
And wild sea-twilight fronts the windward slope!

There the four regions of primordial heaven!
There the four elements and planets seven! —
And the cool torrents of essential air,
And the swift spark and luminous breath of fire,
And odorous earth and lucid water there
Feed blood and bone and spirit and desire!

NOT AN ACADEMICIAN

YOUR courts and carven porticos excel,
Ye've set the busts and bound the books of fame;
Ye've taught me many a date and many a name
Of Heaven and Earth and seven pits of Hell;
And, planning once for long with ye to dwell,
I bought me purple robes and tried the same,
But ever on the midnight rose a flame —
O friends of austere memory, farewell!

No, no! persuade not: "Thou shalt trust the day;
The marble order, the preciser creed,
Thou shalt acknowledge law and bate the fire,"

Sonnets and Poems

For I must answer: "There is one only way --
The night revealed it — tho' I fall and bleed,
God help me, I will trust the heart's desire."

ARCHILOCHUS

(For M——.)

Know'st thou this tale? Archilochus, the Greek;
High browed and dark, like his own cliffs and sea
Ægean, had to bride Neobulé,
The fair and false, who spurned her poet, weak
For love (poor fool!) — but he arose to wreak
Vengeance which is his immortality;
And his iambics, having scorn in fee
And stings of truth, did like the vulture's beak

Rend at her heart — until despair from guile
And wantonness stripped off the spangled veil
Of good repute; and all men knew her vile —
And she did hang herself, she did. The gale
Blew all her garments round the Parian isle,
And none would gather them. Know'st thou the tale?

A VOYAGE

As hunted as the veriest thief that flees
I crossed the city of dead hope that day,
With no farewells, and boarded at the quay
The high red liner, headed for the seas.
The brown smoke boiled from out her stack; the breeze
Fluttered two flags; the deck with folk was gay;
The whistle shrieked; the ropes were cast away,
And forth she steamed.

Sonnets and Poems

She passed the isles, the leas,
The green hills, left and right. Behind at home
The gray towers faded far. The setting sun
Shot golden lines along our wake of foam;
The ocean stars rose round us one by one.
I took my berth to close my eyes and weep;
I recked of nothing — I was on the deep.

THE DRACHENFELS

OF old we housed us on the Hampshire hill,
We plucked the rose, unwound the columbine
From roadside birch, we planted woodland vine
Around the door; we leapt the rock, the rill;
We saw a hundred mountain suns all still
And gold go down the sky; with cheek on mine
A hundred eves you sat beneath the pine
And twilight moon to hear the whippoorwill

With me of old.

And now! — deep seas divide;
Deep seas and deeper hate. — The Rhine is fair
Thro' mists of morning, and along its side
The Drachenfels uplifts its ruin bare
Before me; and I stand in sullen pride,
And of your lot will neither know nor care.

Sonnets and Poems

THE AERY CITY

THE airy city, temple and tower, sleeps.
O'er the broad fields, around her and below;
Lies the blue waste of far unfooted snow,
And takes no shadows from her walls and keeps.
The sun, like death, upon the blank sky creeps,
With pallid disk of silver, tacit, slow —
No winds betwixt this sun and city blow —
In adamantine day the city sleeps.

I pace beside her. All is dreamy cold.
I listen, and no music answers me:
I name the lost, the lucid hills of old,
The violet banks and the melodious lea,
The virgin breasts and sky and year of gold —
Mine, ere I crossed the unreturning sea.

THE BITTEREST HOUR

THOU hast poured poison in my cup of gall!
The mountain echo o'er the lake and lea,
The mountain sunsets, flaming wild and free;
The mountain stillness of the stars, the fall
Of mountain waters, and the shadowy call
Of mountain birds had blessed and haunted me;
Blent with a mountain memory of thee,
When bitter years had urged me far from all:

O dear as inspiration! life and light,
And olden love, and immemorial mood
Were with me yet in sordid house and hall —

Sonnets and Poems

Till, like the pest, dank-fingered in the night,
Thy treachery fouled my soul's last livelihood,
And poured the poison in my cup of gall.

THE IMAGE OF DELIGHT

O how came I that loved stars, moon, and flame;
And unimaginable wind and sea,
All inner shrines and temples of the free,
Legends and hopes and golden books of fame;
I that upon the mountain carved my name
With cliffs and clouds and eagles over me,
O how came I to stoop to loving thee —
I that had never stooped before to shame?

O 'twas not thee! Too eager of a white
Far beauty and a voice to answer mine,
Myself I built an image of delight,
Which all one purple day I deemed divine —
And when it vanished in the fiery night,
I lost not thee, nor any shape of thine.

POSTSCRIPT

LOVE! and my soul like ashes at thy feet!
Love! and blind tears and shattered hopes that fell!
A mad forgiveness — and a wild farewell! —
And broken steps along an old-world street,
The seas between us! — then the withering heat —
The hate that, like a demon roused from hell,

Sonnets and Poems

Smote into flame the splendor and the spell,
Till thou to me wert ashes, Marguerite! —

Ah, I remember. — But when storms are done,
The wet leaves sparkle on the mountain tree;
The gold clouds lie about the setting sun;
The blue waves roll their white crests in from sea;
The gentle stars mount heaven one by one
With ancient light, as now they mount to me.

OUT FROM GOD'S HOUSE

NEW dawns shall come, but I shall read the mass
No more, nor face Thy cross, O Christ, nor ring
The silver bell, nor golden censor swing
Down fuming aisles, God's angel as I pass,
Between the high saints in cathedral glass,
No more, nor never mellow Aves sing
At twilight, when the weary people bring
The long day's burden thro' the gates of brass

To Mary Mother.

 Ah, new dawns shall come,
New eves shall follow; but it is my grief
Of dawns, of eves, to have attained the sum
In love and vision: in mine unbelief
I leave God's house, like Zacharias, dumb,
Nor hold, as he, God's promise of relief.

Sonnets and Poems

COMPENSATION

I KNOW the sorrows of the last abyss:
I walked the cold black pools without a star;
I lay on rock of unseen flint and spar;
I heard the execrable serpent hiss;
I dreamed of sun, fruit-tree, and virgin's kiss;
I woke alone with midnight near and far,
And everlasting hunger, keen to mar;
But I arose, and my reward is this:

I am no more one more amid the throng:
Tho' name be naught, and lips forever weak;
I seem to know at last of mighty song;
And with no blush, no tremor on the cheek,
I do claim consort with the great and strong
Who suffered ill and had the gift to speak.

PAIN AND SPEECH

PAIN drove me from the music and the hall;
Far from the city and the golden truth;
In starless midnights of a blasted youth;
Out to the iron hills, beyond recall,
Where in lone speech I sought to burst my thrall;
Then to return with records, holding sooth
And song and art for men; but fang and tooth
Bit at my throat and choked my lungs with gall

And flame yet more. —

O art is to the free!
When pain is torn, like viper, from the breast;

Sonnets and Poems

Its head in dust beneath the heel, and we
Know it can nevermore uplift its crest —
Then, and then only, may we masters be;
Telling experience to East and West.

OBSURITY

My aims have brought me neither deed nor praise;
For they were bastards of unproved desire,
Got in unholy years to mock their sire
With fatal loves and desperate delays.
And thus for me no boisterous square shall blaze
With festal nights and pageantry of fire;
For me shall sound from no cathedral choir
The larger music of victorious days,

For me, the meagre, thwarted — O my soul,
Hast thou no tear? Nay, nay: there still abide
The mountain air, the sunset and the roll
Of thunder to the immemorial tide,
And the deep self of me within the Whole
Which, still by smiling, still is justified.

THE LAW WITH LIFE FOR GLOSS

CHRIST, wilt thou stand once more and gloss the Law?
If wage of ill be death and wage of good
Were surely life, O Rabbi, Master, could
My soul have reaped this harvest, chaff and straw;
And burning thistle, that had sowed with awe

Sonnets and Poems

In God's own sun, for love and livelihood —
Still trusting thee, O Christ, not understood —
A field as fair as husband ever saw?

But Christ: "Man's faith when man goes out to sow;
Even as man's grief when man comes back to reap,
Are more than seed or harvest — let them go.
Thy soul's experience as new winters sweep
New summers from the hills, at last shall know
To gloss the Law — for lo, the Law is deep."

XAIPE ΦΩΣ!

So, one by one, the inexorable years
Have taught how slow my feet, how far the sun:
Thy streams are wide, O world; thy clouds are dun;
Thy mountains shadowy with the gulf's of fears,
Where hangs the unfelled pine; thy dry wind seres;
And reptiles foul thy pleasant springs that run;
Yet tho' I die before the light be won,
That light more dim to me at last for tears,

O let it be on some supreme far height,
Facing some westward ocean, blue below,
With might to lean upon the verge — with might
To lift the arm and point that they may know,
Who seek me dying, I die unto the light,
And leave me dead in sunset lying so!

Sonnets and Poems

THE GREAT STONE FACE

PRIMEVAL Presence, enthroned upon white space,
Who feel'st the lightnings wither on thy cheek,
Whose iron lips to cloud and thunder speak,
While slumbering aeons crowd thy shadowy base;
Who seest far city, stream, and planted place,
And the blue sunlight on the hundredth peak —
Inexorable, calm, abiding, bleak —
Hail! genius of the mountains, awful face.

Hail and farewell! My spirit faints, and soft
The winds blow inland from eternity;
Thee 'twere not well revisiting too oft
If I would bind the sheaves allotted me —
Thee, nor the everlasting stars aloft,
Nor reaches of the irrevocable sea.

MOUNT WASHINGTON

I SAID: "This morn I will the vision seek,"
So in the sheer car up the mount I spun
O'er pines and shag ravines, and stepped anon
High on the iron summit, piled and bleak.
Here shone the white eternity! here peak
To peak his huge design rolled on and on —
Grand as the thunder, silent as the sun! —
Till histories, arts, religions, man were weak.

But ah, I lost the thrill, the joy, the fear;
And from a crag I murmured: "Soul can know
The kingdoms of the larger atmosphere
Only when soul toils from the place below —
O would my feet were torn with flint and brere,
Or still were wandering where the lilies grow."

Sonnets and Poems

THE ROSE

SILESIUS wrote: "The rose has never a why,"
Chiding man's questionings; and as I read,
Visions of quiet summer and blue sky,
And odorous blooms in gardens of the dead,
And shadows of their low leaves dancing by
On path or grass-plot, with the sunlight shed
Between, came gently to the inward eye,
And half in tears and half in joy I said:

"The rose may weep not when its sisters die,
Its being beauty, and beauty has no 'why,'
Else more than beauty, else a hope, a dream —
We, as the issue of a law more high,
Go up to Delphi where the eagles fly,
Or raise the columns of an Academe."

THREEFOLD LIFE

OUR life is threefold: toil for daily bread,
A little vintage and a little oil,
Consumes the middle day; and after toil,
When golden sunlight (else for joyance shed)
Once more behind the hill or holt is sped,
Then sleep must take us from the stars and foil
The joyance of the splendor-night and coil
Around us dreary shades or dreams of dread;

But in the space between our toil and sleep,
An hour at level dawn, at eve an hour,
A sacred watch we keep, or ought to keep:

Sonnets and Poems

Then stands the soul at peace as in a tower,
And hears the world's eternal music sweep,
And knows its heritage of light and power.

WITH SOME MANUSCRIPT POEMS

(To L. L.)

THIS charge to thee. Because I hold thee free
On stream or mount or at the temple's base,
As one not wavering to pride in place,
To brazen trumpet or to golden fee,
As one who in the pools of life can see
Still somewhat of old dignity and grace;
Still somewhat of the bright reflected face
Of cloud or sky or moon, this charge to thee:

I fear the pest of all-involving night,
I fear the fumes that, gathering round my head;
May choke to silence the one word of might
Life laid upon me: comrade, I am dead —
Thou livest, report me and my cause aright;
And lay for love a laurel on my bed.

WITH THE AGE

FOR good or ill, I master thy desire;
O age and country, making thy life mine;
I fell the forest and I lay the line;
I guide the cranes that swing the steel from fire
And flaring blast; I ride the inland flyer

Sonnets and Poems

Thro' the sown fields; in earth's vast rain and shine
I coast the sea with many a bold design,
And visit cities, climbing tower and spire,

And look abroad and say: "How strong ye are!
How ominous and wide! What new-born will
Is housed among ye, cities near and far
By coast and river and the changeless hill!
How large your dreams, when 'neath the polar star,
The winter night lies round ye, cold and still."

FOR A DRUDGER

THOU shalt win victory from this dull routine
And crown thy head with laurel when 'tis won:
This sure restraint thy youth was fain to shun
Will put new manhood in thy step and mien,
And in thy words, that something strong and keen
Which comes of life when life has bravely done —
Nor wilt thou all forget the mountain sun,
Nor the wild Alps with winds and snows between.

Thou shalt win life: for thou shalt learn with awe
How life is passion, but passion self-controlled,
That flames, even as the stars, by ancient law, —
Even as the stars that flame o'er field and fold,
Beyond earth's nether coasts of gust and flaw,
Bright, beautiful, unalterable and old.

Sonnets and Poems

FOR HUSBANDMEN

(On the Coast.)

No more shall thunder and the lightning's bane
Darken and terrify the populous lea —
The afternoon comes buoyant from the sea,
Like a fresh dawn across an upland plain!
The shadows sweep the purple hills again;
At mountain distance rides the rainbow free;
There is a whisper as of days to be,
And earth's new odor rises after rain

In golden steam.—

O husbandmen, go forth!

Primeval, wise, shag-browed and large of hand;
Ye workers still beneath the law of old! —
The utmost cities of the South and North
Await their health of ye; and all the land
Against late years for ye puts by its gold.

VENICE IN RAIN

(Early Morning.)

THE island city of our orient dreams
Sleeps in a mist from haunted seas, and gray
Horizons dimly shut her from the day,
And rain is on her streets and understreams;
From off St. Mark's no crimson banner gleams;
No balcony with floating silk is gay;
No sails Byzantine dot the sunless bay;
Yet now a beacon, now a window beams:

Sonnets and Poems

And by old marble houses here and there
Her gondolas lie moored at step or door,
Like barks funereal about to bear
This lyric race unto no earthly shore,
With Titian's painted dames of russet hair
And Tasso's lute — away forevermore.

NEW YORK IN SUNSET

THE island city of dominion stands,
Crowned with all turrets, o'er the waters' crest;
Throned, like the bright Cybele of the West,
And hailed with cymbals in a million hands
Around her: yet serenely she commands
The inland vision and the ocean quest,
The new-born mistress of the world's unrest,
The beauty and the terror of the lands.

She sees the fields of harvest sown for her,
She sees the fortress set beside her gate,
Her hosts, her ships, she sees thro' storm and fire;
And hers all gifts of gold and spice and myrrh,
And hers all hopes, all hills and shores of fate;
And hers the fame of Babylon and Tyre.

THE EXPRESS

SHE comes! I hear her whistle mount the air
High o'er the howling storm, and down the black
Gulf of the station, where the level track
Shoots into night, I see her headlight flare!

Sonnets and Poems

The swaying bell rings out its wild beware,
The long, low smoke is trailing from her stack,
The chill draught strikes — the crowd is pressing back;
She comes, she stops — how terrible and fair!

Would mine her swift night in the windy gorge,
O'er trestles shaken with a mountain roar,
O'er snow-swept plain, by factory and forge,
By lights of cities on the inland shore,
And island beacons! — O would mine her dower
Of large experience and splendid power!

REMARKS

(On reading of the intended sale of the White Mountains to
a lumber company.)

THE nations have rebuked us: "Greed for gold
Costs ye voice, vision; costs ye faith and fame."
Is this their envy? Shall we gloss our shame
Writing it "progress," "enterprise"? Behold
Our civic life a trade, our rich men old
Bribing Opinion for an honest name,
And art and letters counted jest or blame,
When (but how seldom!) they will not be sold.

We traffic with our birthright: our domain
Of torrents thundering inland shall be dumb —
We have sold our cataracts to turn our mills;
And having lifted up our eyes in vain,
Whence our help cometh, but no more may come;
Now we would sell the everlasting hills!

Sonnets and Poems

KAISER WILLIAM IN BONN

THE Kaiser comes ! and Rhineland's houses ring;
And windows flutter with the Black-white-red,
And Rhineland's sun is golden overhead,
And Rhineland's hymn a thousand voices sing,
As down the highway, where the white girls fling
The flowers of Rhineland for her lord to tread,
With hand on rein and helmet on the head,
The Kaiser comes — and every inch a King!

He knows the land of olden battles won;
He hears a sound and he will not forget,
And Rhineland's watch is still the true, the free;
And in this faith his eye hath dared the sun,
And his great heart, O Fatherland, hath set
Its larger hope for all mankind in thee.

WALT WHITMAN

IN Washington in war-times, once I read,
When down the street the good gray poet came —
A roving vagabond unknown to fame —
From watches by the dying and the dead,
The old slouch hat upon his shaggy head,
His eyes aglow with earth's immortal flame,
Lincoln, who marked him from the window frame,
The judge of men; the deep-eyed Lincoln, said:
"That is a man." —

Sonnets and Poems

What poet hath juster meed,
Whose brazen statue in the morning stands
O'er marble avenues of elder lands? —
In life, in death, that was a man indeed. —
O ye who 'gainst him lift your righteous hands;
And ye, the fops that ape his manhood, heed!

NATURA MAGNA

GAZE not at hearth-flame nor at funeral pyre
Too long in dreams or tears; but rise and bare
Your souls to lightning; see the mountain flare
Forth its wild torrents of essential fire!
Sit not too long by well-springs of desire
In shadowy woodlands with the white nymphs; fare
Out to blue ocean and the sun-bright air! —
Hark! the deep voice: "Exult ye, and aspire!"

"As some god's festival on holy ground
Ye shall approach my universe afar,
Naked and swift as heroes, from all climes;
Thus ye shall fill an epos with new sound,
Thus ye shall yield new names for many a star,
And thus from ye shall date the aftertimes."

Sonnets and Poems

THE MUSE

SPIRIT, whom seer and singer name the Muse,
Be with me, radiant with thy peace and power,
When rocks are foaming and the main seas lower;
Or mountain sunsets widen with all hues;
Be with me when I wake in upland dews,
And when I walk in city dust or shower,
And when I love in hall or watch in tower;
Be with me when I win and when I lose!

Thou shalt be with me! The decree is mine!
And mine dominion and the primal will!
Tho' called no longer from Parnassus hill,
Thou shalt be with me and no less divine —
The immanent Vigilance, creating still
The nobler nature, the more bold design.

VIGIL

WHEN austere hunger, the stern lord of all,
Shut me from day, the mountainous and free;
To sell for bread my golden liberty
In her chief city her obscurest thrall,
I turned to night, deep night primordial;
On the bleak housetop I went up to see,
And in my desolation came to me
The starry vision of the flaming wall.

By chastening sorrow rendered fit and wise
My utter dearth gave me immortal eyes,

Sonnets and Poems

And when night broke the day's blue dome, I passed
Coeval, outward where eternity
Fills her long coasts with winds than ours more vast
And radiance whiter than the polar sea.

THE WORLD AND THE SOUL

THE starry clouds about the world are blown,
And rain-fresh suns rise over mount and mead;
The slant pine sways in black crevasse; the weed
Swings its green locks in ocean on a stone;
The herds are on the hills; kings on the throne;
White cities rear their gates for show or need
And sing of heroes — and behold! a seed
Here on the coast of time, my soul is sown.

Yet lo! a world within its obscure cell —
Light, darkness, storms, shapes demon and divine;
The inward visions out of Heaven and Hell —
And choice to make the one or other mine!
Hold fast, my soul, hold fast and all is well!
Master thine own and every world is thine!

MENS IMMORTALIS

I AM the Lord of Heaven and Hell; I reign
King from the blue void to dim gulfs below;
My counsellors were gathered long ago
From conquered hosts of pleasure and of pain.

Sonnets and Poems

And when at sanction of their suzerain
They speak the wisdom only they can know,
My just decrees work thrift or overthrow
Throughout my old and eminent domain.

I plant the mountain where I laid the plain,
Create the seas and suns of afterglow,
Call the great thunder and the wild, slant rain,
And rear me shrines for worship or for show—
Destroying all, when, for my growth and gain,
I wish new worlds to rise, new winds to blow.

FOR OUR FATHERS' SONS

WE must be heroes! Earth's old rivers flow
But earth's religions comfort us no more,
And the old faith that looked so far of yore,
Lies, with all temples, bare to wind and snow;
But standing at our fathers' graves we know
(And this is much), that spite of waste and war,
'Twere to deny our being to give o'er:
We shall be heroes! And for strength we go

(Will ye not go?) out to the mountains! — Still,
Tho' we have glossed anew the psalmist's verse,
Our help shall come from out the ancient hill,
And we shall promise largely and fulfill,
Feeling, as heroes, our unconquered will,
Part of the epic of the universe!

Sonnets and Poems

A TRYST

AFTER the evil years, so long alone—
Thou in dusk chambers by the sullen wave,
I at the foothills in a shadowy cave—
O sister—spirit, we are free! Our own
Here in wild twilight is the trysting stone,
Here on the slope, which high winds lash and lave,
As seas a promontory. O be brave,
And range the starry night from zone to zone

With me, my sister!
Hesperus is before us!
Behind the mount, unseen our sorrows sleep!
Anon the constellations tower o'er us:
Great Nature, in primeval mood and deep,
Restores our love, even as she will restore us
Our light—exultant on her mountain steep!

RAIN

Who loves the sun and stars shall love the rain;
Who walks the mountain with the golden cloud
Shall cringe not at the mountain thunder, loud
Beyond the lightning and the hurricane.
Who swims the blue cove shall abide the main
When black with storms, still buoyant and uncowed;
Who feels earth's light about him as a shroud;
Shall feel earth's vast, earth's elemental rain.

Sonnets and Poems

O love ye not the forest, bird, and flower,
And shadowy shapes of sunlight down the glen,
And moonbeams scattered in the midnight wood?
O wait! O listen! Earth's revolving hour
Brings ye anon the forest rain again
And dusk and music of her ancient mood!

WITH MOTHER EARTH

'Tis well to spend a lucid afternoon
In the long silvery grass, with upturned eye
Noting the leaves that fret the azure sky;

'Tis well to wait the coming of the moon;
Out on the hillside, over fields of June.

'Tis well to listen, when abed we lie,
To midnight murmurs of the rain and try
To mark therein the world's primeval tune.

'Tis well to know, that (spite of death and dearth
And evil men in cities plotting ill
And friends that leave us when our thoughts are new)

The good man may abide with Mother Earth
And dream his dreams and have his visions still
And trust the Infinite to see him thro'.

Sonnets and Poems

BEHIND THE OLD HOUSE

(Among the Hills.)

BEHIND the old house beds of lettuce grow;
The winds across the dancing red-top blow;
The brook is bright with blue forget-me-nots
As when we gathered long, long years ago.

Behind the old house on a trellis nod
The sweetpease (purple o'er the goldenrod);
Whose incense, like an unseen beauty, fills
The upland morning and the fields of God.

Behind the old house, down the narrow lane;
After long years the mountain sun again!
After long years the wide primeval dawn,
Gold o'er the white mists of the midland plain!

And how those years of sorrow glorify
The fresh, free, olden things of earth and sky!

COASTWISE

(North Shore.)

ALL night; fog-bound in murky seas we rode
Off perilous capes and nameless coasts of dread;
Our vague lights seeking, like dim ghosts in red;
The pallid regions round our dusk abode;
The moonless tides beneath us ebbed and flowed;
And unseen ships that bolder steered ahead
Shrieked weird and far, like voices of the dead,
And all night long we answered where we rode.

Sonnets and Poems

But with the morn the sun came vast and round,
And winds came golden o'er the wide blue sea,
And weighing anchor in a world of light,
We scudded down the main and made the sound
And marked the port, our city of the free,
Low on the purple sky, secure and bright.

FOR A FOREST WALKER

(In Franconia.)

QUAFF the mid-forest spring! Sink palms and knees
In the deep moss and let the big rank ferns
Strike on the flushed cheek and the fevered neck,
And let thy hair, warmed in those sultry shades,
Float, with the oozy twigs and yellow leaves,
The near black water! O, with pursèd lips
Quaff till thou feelst it cool in heart and frame—
Then up thro' pines and thickets to the light!

Yonder the valley and the mountain lake!
The sunset clouds are trembling in the waves,
The wild deer drink among the windy rocks;
And thou shalt call for joy aloud, and hear
A mountain echo that will die away
Seven times repeated on the crimson air!

Sonnets and Poems

FOR A DECADENT

LIVE out in air! Drink the swift life of winds;
Warm o'er the summer fields and sweet with flowers;
And buoyant with the salts of primal earth,
Or cold and vital over starry snows.

Live in the sun! and far from evil men,
To the great sun bare breast and throat and thigh;
And hail at morn with naked upstretched arms
The promise of the wide day and the sun!

Thus, plenished with an ancient strength, shalt thou
Leap from the rocks and swim the sea and reach
The island caves and bind the mermaid's hair;
Or push thro' brake and brier up the cliffs
Out over all the mountain gulfs of pine,
And stand with summit gods, primevally!

THE SYLLOGISM (A)

All men are mortal. Death marks every zone;
His low white cities gleam in every land,
The king goes down with peasant hand in hand;
Death hath all earth, all seasons, for his own.
I am a man, somehow to stature grown,
Somehow (as all) with feet to walk the strand;
Somehow with eye to see and to command,
Somehow with heart to suffer all alone.

And I am mortal; I too must be gone,
From hill or meadow smit of flame and sky;

Sonnets and Poems

Or from the shadow with the shutter drawn —
And long a watcher of the stars am I,
A listener at the sea from dusk to dawn,
And need no schoolmen, Death, to prove it by.

WHEN DEATH SHALL COME

WHEN death shall come (in spite of heart aflame
And wished-for morrows and new steps ahead
On toward the rivers and the morning-red),
And I shall lie the shattered fool of fame,
Draw not the curtain down the casement frame
Past the dear trees; and let no prayer be said;
Nor holy wine be brought nor holy bread
To rob the pagan of his light and name.

But get me balsam where the west wind stirr'th
And lay in odorous linen at my cheek,
That I may enter to the great Unknown
With old familiar memories of earth;
Of forest, brook, and bird, and mountain peak
And the blue sky around them, zone o'er zone!

SUCCESS

THE people have imagined a vain thing;
Touching the old issues that are life: Success
Will still be reckoned in the more or less
Of riches, lands, or station; still we bring
Our homage to those paltry gods who fling
These paltrier favors round — to Custom, Dress,

Sonnets and Poems

To Etiquette, Discretion, Cleverness —
And still would smile if once more one should sing:

“Success is character, as riches are
In knowledge which no fire nor fraud can take;
The good man, conscious of the morning star,
Shall own all lands, as lovely for his sake;
His station is with counsellors afar,
Who for eternal justice work and wake.”

THE GOOD CAUSE

ROUND the old house where lilacs bloomed and died;
Armed with the mimic bow my father gave,
A boy I marched and dreamed of coast and cave
And bears descending from the mountain side;
Or down dusk vistas of the arbor, wide,
And cool with scent of grapes, I sped to save
Fair ladies lost in woods, for I was brave
And sought adventure equal to my pride.

That house is down; the high hour never came;
The boy remembered but in tale or jest,
Yet the good cause, O Life, is still the same:
I see the days, the scope, of East and West;
The shapes I see are of heroic name —
Scorn, poverty, disease — and this is best.

Sonnets and Poems

FOR A SCHOOL OF ARTISTS

HEAR me at last! I've read old books and new;
I've housed with sages either side the sea;
I've asked my soul when stars were over me;
I've watched in cities men with work to do;
I've been at Delphi when the eagle flew;
I've wept alone in dark Gethsemane;
And now I know, whatever gods there be,
Whatever temples rise, my guess was true:

The Good is good — and we shall tend the fire,
The holy flame that burns behind the veil!
And each design of ours and each desire
That would deny the eternal Good shall fail —
And art, that mocks that sunbright temple, must
Lie soon or late a harlot in the dust.

THE LAW PREVAILS

THE Law prevails! When every silver gain;
So proudly won from furious greed of lust,
Lies with man's broken spirit in the dust,
And earth's pure winds blow over him in vain;
He sees in visions, born of utter pain,
The Law anew — how beautiful and just —
And its profound, majestic "Thou must"
Sounds in his soul like thunder down the plain

At twilight.

And he turns, he looks, he lifts
His empty hands, his pleading arms to heaven —

Sonnets and Poems

Then roused anew, then on anew, he shifts
His burden off and scorns to be forgiven —
While manhood's pride, his soul's salvation still,
Unto "*Thou must*" makes answer bold: "*I will.*"

LADY, NOT MINE

(For E——.)

LADY, not mine the courtier's gracious part
To kiss thy hand in hall when lamps are hung,
And, with a poised address and ready tongue,
Speak as befits thy gentle birth and heart;
Nor mine to linger when the guests depart
And offer, after every song is sung,
The delicate verse that names thee fair and young;
Sweet rose of ladies, lady, as thou art:

But were we met in such a spot, I'd say:
"Come; let us take the moonlit marble way;
The nightingale is in the cypress tree;
And past the terrace the stream glides on to sea;
And when beyond the dim hills dawns the day,
The morning star shall sing my song to thee."

LOVE AFAR

I DARE not look, O Love, on thy dear grace;
On thine immortal eyes, nor hear thy song,
For O too sore I need thee and too long,
Too weak as yet to meet thee face to face.

Sonnets and Poems

Thy light would blind — for dark my dwelling place —
Thy voice would wake old thoughts of right and wrong;
And hopes which sleep, once beautiful and strong,
That would unman me with a dread disgrace:

Therefore, O Love, be as the evening star,
With amber light of land and sea between,
A high and gentle influence from afar,
Persuading from the common and the mean;
Still as the moon when full tides cross the bar
In the wide splendor of a night serene.

THE JESTER

(For M ——.)

*('Tis little here nor there to you
Or me what now I say,
But just another rhyme or two
To pass the time of day.
You like my rhymes, you say you do;
They are so very gay.)*

I knew a fool who followed one
Bright lady of the land.
The lady smiled the fool upon;
So regally and bland,
And had him put his coxcomb on
And sit and hold her hand.

Then would she smile his rhymes to hear,
And pet him and aver

Sonnets and Poems

Her fool was twenty times as dear
As other ladies' were.
(And right was she, for all the year
He rhymed to only her.)

For all the year he'd rhyme and dream
(O that's a fool his part),
"My lady's fair as fair may seem
And loves me without art,"—
Until the heart leapt up in him
(A fool may have a heart!)

The lady marked his heart to leap
And thought, "Of every jest
That thro' my poor fool's brain can creep
This is indeed the best,"—
(For let a fool but love and weep
The whole fool stands confessed).

The fool he told (ah, foolishly);
His love he told so true;
He scarce did see her shallow glee
At what a fool could do;
Till jested she, "Nay, fool, ah me;
I am not worthy you."

The fool he did not understand
(His wits had little lore),
The fool he could not understand
(But ah, his heart was sore).
He left the lady of the land
And jested nevermore.

The lady of the land did grieve
For hours twenty-four;

Sonnets and Poems

Another fool she did receive
Long ere the next was o'er:
For every lady, I believe,
Must have one fool — or more.

*('Tis little here nor there to you
Or me what now I say,
'Twas but another rhyme or two
To pass the time of day.
You like my rhymes, you say you do;
They are so very gay.)*

RESOLVE

THERE is an end. The fever and the pain;
The craving unto life with that far hope
Of mornings and of twilights, seen by two,
Shall torture me no more. The nightly stars
Beam downward and the sun and moon arise
And pass o'er earth with all its snows and grass
And towers and scattered graves, and seeds are blown
And pestilence with winds, and there be tears
For sorrow, smiles for joy. The Eternal Law
Works in all regions, bringing light and dark.
It works in me. It makes in me an end
Even of the woe which it before had wrought,
And leads me to the springs beyond the mount;
Beyond all populous cities, where each man
Must flee when all is lost, and in myself
I find at last the rod which strikes the rocks
Of living waters.

Sonnets and Poems

I have garnered long
O'er many lands, in many books. I own
Old trees and castles, cataracts and heights,
And orient cities dusk along the Nile,
Old fountains, marbles, pictures, red and gold;
From blue Valdarno, and old meters too
From Scio, Delphi, Mantua down the South,
From northern Weimar and the Avon stream;
And folksongs of the Alp and Apennine
And German rivers. Lo, I own the dream
Of Plato and the hardiness of Kant.
I have all wealth within me; I will look.

And I have that within me which shall build
Even from the fragments of dead hopes a house
Where I may dwell as I grow more a god.

INVITATION

(For G ——.)

COME, voyage with me! Somewhere in ocean day
The porpoise bound from wave to wave away!
And in the sun the distant sail we'll see,
Guess what its lading, what its port may be;
And when the twilight purples in the blast,
And the red lamp is hoisted up the mast,
How bright our visions, our desires how free!
O sweet my lady, overseas with me!

Over the seas there is a golden hall
Where some old king set pictures on the wall;
Thro' the arched hangings in the door, I saw
The robed Hidalgo and the Cardinal.

Sonnets and Poems

There reels the Bacchus with his cloven crew;
Diana bathes, Acteon's hounds pursue;
The comely damsels, seen by Veronese,
Will drink the wondrous wine the Savior drew.

And overseas are gardens of delight;
There antique urns, so still and cool and white,
And a carved Venus on a scolloped shell,
Gleam in the moon of blue Italian night.

There the tall cypress on the terrace looms
O'er shadowy roses of old-world perfumes,
And down the marble steps, by Tiber's reeds,
The fireflies dart among the Roman tombs.

And overseas an inland lake there lies,
Where by a castle, under mountain skies,
Sails the slant shallop, with the one white wing,
On waters bluer than a mother's eyes.

There slope the vineyards in autumnal peace
Where loved and lingered the New Heloise,
And the far Alps are touched with rose, and day
Dies, and the mellow Angelus will cease.

Thither, O thither! and in the nights between
We'll watch the stars upon the deck unseen,
Trace their designs with finger — thus and so —
In ancient legends telling what they mean,
And think how once the same stars long ago
Guided Ulysses to his island queen.

Sonnets and Poems

THE CLOUD

(In token of reverent love to Shelley.)

FROM that far birth down vaporous eastern seas;
Where I arose a-morning, white and cold,
And felt the salt foam slipping from my wings;
And felt the new winds driving thro' my hair,
And felt the quick hope of the rounded sky,
Even with my life, great god, I have followed thee;
O'er desolate oceans where no triremes cross,
Above the shadowy cliffs and wandering isles;
Rivers and plains and cities on the hills;
High in the silent kingdoms of blue day,
I have followed thee, my golden god of light;
And known no rest, for gazing on thy light —
Nor no despair; for ever I felt thy soul
Building its golden image in mine own,
Fairer and brighter as I followed on —
And this methought was immortality.

But now thy foot is on the mountain-top;
Thou walkest the extreme limits of the world;
The mountain paths along the western world;
And there is terror in thy far step for me
And a swift dread of a most sudden doom —
Great sun upon the mountains, go not yet!
O never before hast thou been like to this;
Ah goldener now for more divinity
And multiplying with divine excess
Thyself thro' all things, beautiful god! And I;
I too am goldener now for more of thee —
Ah never before so filled with lovely light;
Ah never before so conscious of a soul,

Sonnets and Poems

And longing unto godhead which is thee.
O go not yet, thou art so beautiful!

I know not what may meet thee in the realms
Beyond the mountains; if another day
And other souls for thee to glorify
Await thee there, or the devouring caves
And bleak abysses of an underworld
Of murkiest chaos, whose wild blasts even now
May reach the outmost streamers of thy hair,
I know not; but I know when thou art gone
My life is gone, my love, my soul is gone,
My immortality is turned to death —
Death in the hollow spaces of vast night,
Death in the winds, and fallen, fallen at last,
O death along the rivers and dank earth,
Where the torn fragments of my soul shall wind
O'er black morass or flit above dark tops
Of forest pines that murmur a strange tone,
Or blown against some northern precipice,
Lie a cold dew upon the midnight rocks,
Bared to the light of the mysterious stars.

EURIS

EURIS, who loved the sunrise and the night;
And silver regions of the wintry sky,
Valleys and flowers and shadows of the clouds
On purple mountains in the golden fall —
Euris would challenge Truth. So on a day
He sailed from Athens in a Punic bark
Over meridian seas to Egypt old,

Sonnets and Poems

And came, the salt breeze still amid his hair,
To Memphis plain and faced the placid Sphinx.

Hard by the Nile

With venerable ease rolled down the snows
Of ancient Ethiop to the ancient seas.

Then Euris spake, the voluble young Greek:
"Chaire, thou symbol of the Unperplexed!
O open those shut lips! What hearest thou
From out the eternal winds that sweep thine ears;
From out the blue day domed around thy head,
From out the sun and stars and quiet march
Of secret waters by the ruined sands?

O open those shut lips! What seest thou
With those beholding eyes of time and death
And the dim steps of years? Their shrouded feet
How oft have startled me in pleasant things
Even when I plucked the Greek anemones,
Or rowed with comrades off Piræus port.

What seest thou, that thou canst front them here —
Here in the desert, steadfast and alone?

Speak! Is the veil about the universe
Of woven evening and the spangled night,
Of poppy field and hill and ocean stream,
A perishable garment? If it be,
Is there a godlike nakedness behind —
White as the vision throned on Melos isle,
Our Aphrodite — from whose breasts of fame
The beautiful robes even to the bended thigh
Are fallen away, revealing deity?
Mysterious Vigil, speak to me, O speak!"

Then spake the Sphinx in few, the wary Sphinx:
"Mortal, the sand is deep, ah, very deep
That locks the hidden places of my feet;

Sonnets and Poems

My brain is of the rock that makes the hills;
And that is obdurate, abiding long:
I wait the cycles of the centuries —
I am not yet all-spirit, not yet all-wise;
Albeit the symbol of the Unperplexed."

Then Euris, puzzled for reply, returned
Sorrowing o'er Memphis plain; and on a day
Sailed back to Athens in a Punic bark
Over meridian seas from Egypt old;
And dwelt in Hellas, having challenged Truth.

But ever he loved the sunrise and the night;
And silver regions of the wintry sky,
Valleys and flowers and shadows of the clouds
On purple mountains in the golden fall.

*HERACLITUS, THE OBSCURE*¹

(For W. R. N.)

I

SAID Heraclitus on the palace steps,
Beholding wide: "Ephesians, ye are mad;
Ye feed like cattle, hearing no strange sound;
Ye crawl like blind-worms, seeing not a light
And a far flame; ye sleep, wine-drenched and dull;
And know the Logos not. The Eternal Law,
The Weaver of night and day, and body and soul,
Ye will not know; altho' each son of man

¹ Based upon the *Fragmenta*, but the historical Heraclitus was a *Basileus*, not a King.

Sonnets and Poems

For that same Law shall fight, as for a wall,
And yield no foot. What few have lit a lamp,
In the dark night they wander and damp fields,
And turn much earth and scatter sod and sand,
Grubbing for fools' gold, while the lamp goes out
And they are wide from house. For vain are eyes
Unto barbaric souls.

“Mad folk, mad folk!

Along the highways, after olden use,
Reel the crazed votaries with the phallos raised
And Dionysius hail! and obscene girls
Uncloak their lust unshamed. Ye kneel and beg
A gift of some vile stone ye name a god —
Zeus, Aphrodite, Heré, Artemis —
But hear no thunder, see no moon. Ye lave
Your crimes of blood with steaming blood away —
Lustration wise as who has fouled his hands
With the green dung should lave his hands with dung
And deem him clean!

“Mad folk! and how ye bark,
Like hounds, at me ye know not. As the shag
And lap-eared ass, blinking between the gold
And yellowish chaff, ye take the chaff at last —
Twelve thousand of ye value not one good —
And shall I rest the king of such as ye,
Speaking a Law no king yet ever spake,
Ye comprehending not? — There lie my robes
For who may find them. Naked as the night
I will go forth, I will return no more.”

And so he passed to where the tropic hills
Stood blue behind the city, and the tides
Swept long unfooted sands beyond the walls.

Sonnets and Poems

II

Said Heraclitus standing by the sea,
Beholding wide: "The Law shall not be lost.
The fire descends from heaven upon the sea,
Then from the sea whirls up the water-spout,
Mixed with black rolling thunder and quick flame,
To heaven again. So fire to water, water to fire wends,
And water unto earth. Lo, all things change,
But tho' none know the Law shall not be lost.

"Bathe, laughing children, in Cayster stream,
Under hot day; ye bathe O never again
In this same stream, which yet is not the same;
For all things flow, for all things flow forever,
And tho' none know the Law shall not be lost.

"The sea-fish shoal about the headland rocks
Deep in blue water; but those I enticed
Out to the air are dead on the salt grass;
And men whose white sails lured them to the main
Lie still below and sea-weeds wrap their skulls.
The sunbright day reeks foul with purplish death,
The brack and deadly ocean teems with life;
Each element to each and after his kind,
But tho' none know the Law shall not be lost.

"I hear far battles hid beyond the clouds
That float on the western waves — there is new war
Somewhere on coast or plain; but all is war;
The father of all, the king of all is war;
And some he makes to gods and some to men,
Some slaves, some free, creating, slaying all.
Lo, peace is strife, and strife is peace forever.
Man dies his life and lives his death each day,
But tho' none know the Law shall not be lost."

Sonnets and Poems

“Only the Rhythm, only the Law abides.
The Pendulum that measures life and death,
And all the forms of fire, swings unchanged
Under the Law, which will be called high Zeus,
And yet will not (for 'tis above all men,
But all gods too). . . . And day and night return;
Winter and summer, autumn and spring return,
And the world-æons of fire-death and -birth.
And tho' none know the Law shall not be lost.

“For I will speak. The Sibyl, wild and shunned,
Endures in memories of a thousand years —
Tho' all her words were turbulent and dark,
Endureth she, for thro' her speaks the god.”

III

Far from the city deep in autumn night
He laid his scroll in shrine of Artemis —
Where strangers found it after many years.

THE WATCH OF NATIONS

(The World's Weather Bureaus.)

THE earth bears on among the stars
Her purple hills and deserts brown,
With seas and isles and harbor bars,
And cities of an old renown.

Her winds from coast and cave come forth
With vital seeds or fatal pest,
Her icebergs drift from out the north,
Her wild clouds flame in east and west.

Sonnets and Poems

Her lightnings meet in southern skies;
And breakers lash the south-sea reef,
Her snow on tropic mountain lies
O'er sultry plains of flower and leaf.

Her rain sounds hollow in the dells;
And drives across the lakes of spring;
Her smoke ascends the forest hills
At autumn dusks in wreath and ring.

Thro' summer mists, as thro' a shroud,
Her moon will rise on summer nights,
Orion thro' the winter cloud
Beyond will see the northern lights.

Earth's beauty and earth's law shall hold;
Earth's terror and earth's law be scanned;
Our weathermen are wise and bold,
And set the watch from land to land.

On peaks, with shadows in the plain,
On cliffs, with shadows in the sea,
They watch for us in sun or rain,
And name earth's wonders yet to be.

And men with harvests still to reap,
And men with ships that must put forth;
And men with children on the deep,
And kings with armies in the north,¹

Await from day to day the word,
As ancient hosts the prophet's voice,
And when within the gates 'tis heard,
They tremble or rejoice.

¹ When the armies were in Manchuria.

TO FRIENDS

THESE verses to my friends: for scattered far
In many a land, O friends of mine, ye are.
Do ye remember, too? O ye who hear
White Mountain echoes all the northern year,
And ye who see snowfields of cotton-boll
In Carolinas, and ye twain who cull
The poppies on Italian fields and seize
Those golden sunsets for Rome's galleries,
Do ye remember? Ye of Lac de Genève,
Between blue Jura and our own Salève,
Do ye remember, Franks of Switzerland?
And ye in utmost Moscow, with the hand
Secret and steady for that freedom yet
Ye swore at Goettingen, do ye forget?
And ye beneath the Drachenfels am Rhein,
Where books and wine and song and mellow shine
Of quiet suns made life almost divine,
And Fatherland, true Fatherland of mine?
And ye who walk the cities of the West,
And feel alone the teeming world's unrest,
Once felt together — and thou, too, tried and brave;
Who scatterest violets on an English grave,
Dost thou remember?

The same stars arise
All round the earth but lead us otherwise.

Sonnets and Poems

THE PHANTOM SKATER

THE moon has burst the winter cloud,
And silvers o'er the frozen reeds,
And up a forest stream, a bowed
And solitary skater speeds.

His scarf floats o'er his bended back,
His curved blades shimmer in the night;
He hears the rumbling ice-field crack,
With stroke to left, with stroke to right.

The wild wind whirls from leaf and limb
The dry snow out across his path;
In wild ravines afar and dim
The wolves of famine howl in wrath.

I know not where he closed the door;
Nor whither bound, nor what the clime;
But on he glides forevermore,
A skater of the olden time:

They say he craves no earthly bread,
They say he cannot fear nor tire,
They say that he is spirit-fed,
And name him Phantom, Hope, Desire.

Sonnets and Poems

THE CREATION OF THE MORROW

(From the Sanscrit.)

YAMA was gone. The gods consoling said:
"O weep not, Yami," and they raised her head;
But "Yama is gone, he will not come again,"
She murmured nor would yet be comforted.

Then mused the gods: "She weeps, remembering still
Their sleeps and kisses on the purple hill —
Let us create the night." — The night was born
With starry shades and winds invisible.

So came the morrow that ere then was not,
And many morrows — Yami left her cot,
And played with flowers on the mead in mirth;
Tossing them idly. Yama was forgot.

THREE FRAGMENTS OF EMPEDOCLES¹

I. The Seeker Reverent. (Frag. 4.)

BUT turn their madness,² Gods! from tongue of mine;
And drain thro' holy lips the well-spring clear!
And many-wooed, O white-armed Maiden-Muse;
Thee I approach: O drive and send to me
Meek Piety's well-reined chariot of song,
So far as lawful is for men to hear,

¹ From a manuscript translation of all the fragments, based on Diel's text.

² That is, the blasphemous speculations of other philosophers, as Parmenides.

Sonnets and Poems

Whose lives are but a day. . . . Nor shall desire
To pluck the flowers of fame and wide report
Among mankind impel thee on to dare
Speech beyond holy bound nor headlong speed
Against those topmost pinnacles of Truth.

II. Dominion. (Frag. 111.)

AND thou shalt master every drug that e'er
Was made defense 'gainst sickness and old age. . . .
And thou shalt calm the might of tireless winds,
That burst on earth and ruin seedlands; aye,
And if thou wilt, shalt thou arouse the blasts
And watch them take their vengeance, wild and shrill;
For that before thou cowedst them. Thou shalt change
Black rain to drought, at seasons good for men,
And the long drought of summer shalt thou change
To torrents, nourishing the mountain trees,
As down they stream from ether. And thou shalt
Beckon from Hades spirits of the dead.

III. In the Golden Age. (Frag. 128.)

NOR unto them
Was any Ares god, nor Kydoimos,¹
Nor Zeus, the king of gods, nor Kronos; nor
Poseidon then, but only Kypris queen . . .
Whom they with holy gifts were wont to appease;
With painted images of living things,
With costly unguents of rich fragrancy,
With gentle sacrifice of taintless myrrh,
With redolent fumes of frankincense, of old
Pouring libations out upon the ground

¹ Personification of uproar, as in battle.

Sonnets and Poems

Of yellow honey; not then with profuse blood
Of many bulls was ever an altar stained;
But among men 'twas sacrilege most vile
To reave of life and eat the goodly limbs.

PRINCE CARNIVAL

(From the German of my friend, George Sylvester Viereck.)

JANGLING bells and crackling whip,
Laughter and jest on every lip!—
Thou drew'st thy gorgeous mantle tight,
But lo, I marked, I knew at sight.

In all this dazzling mirth the best,
A golden star upon thy breast,
The kingly sceptre in thy hand,
Thou gazest on thy fairyland.

But as thou tak'st the golden wine
A glory round thy head will shine;
Then all are 'ware along the hall
That it is thou — Prince Carnival!

A shout goes up from row to row;
Viols strike in and trumpets blow;
Thy quick hand swings the whip with art;
Thy laughter masters every heart.

Yet as into thine eyes I peer,
There looks on me a woe so near;
All utterless, and hidden all,
Unhappy Prince of Carnival!

Sonnets and Poems

'Tis but a mask, this jesting part —
Mankind's eternal pain thou art!
Once in the year, like storm long pent;
Forth bursts thy heart-sick merriment.

An inward fire feverishly
Tortures and goads the blood in thee;
That for the moment thou mayest forget
How poor, how sick thy heart is yet.

Therefore my heart it burns for thee;
Thou beautiful Prince from Faëry,
And my love, my Prince, is great,
As boundless as impassionate!

It is the deepest of all things
How man unto his Sorrow clings,
His breast's own pain supreme thro' all —
So I love thee, Prince Carnival!

BUDDHA

(From the German of Arno Holz.)

By night around my temple grove
watch seventy brazen cows.
A thousand mottled stone lampions flicker.

Upon a red throne of lac
I sit in the Holy of Holies.

Over me
thro' the beams of sandle-wood;
in the ceiling's open square,
stand the stars.

Sonnets and Poems

I blink.

Were I now to rise up
my ivory shoulders would splinter the roof;
and the oval diamond upon my brow
would stave in the moon.

The chubby priests may snore away.

I rise not up.
I sit with legs crossed under
and observe my navel.

It is a blood red ruby
in a naked belly of gold.

THE SAIL

(From the Russian.)

WHITE gleams the lone sail far from shore
In purple mists and boundless wind;
What seeketh she in lands before?
What has she left in homes behind?

The foam is thrown about her prow;
Her bending mast is beat with spray;
But ah, no hope she seeketh now;
And from no hope she rides away.

Beneath, blue streams of ocean lea;
Above, blue day in east and west —
But for the wild storm yearneth she;
As if amid the storm were rest.

Sonnets and Poems

THE STEAMER

THE steamer plows the middle sea
With smoke behind and foam before;
And thro' whatever nights there be
She anchors not from shore to shore:

Tho' head winds smite her onward form;
And waves from east to west be hurled;
Tho' ocean stars be hid in storm
Beyond the glimpses of the world,

Her needle tells the unseen path,
Eternal law to her desire;
And her unconquered speed she hath
In quenchless heart of flame and fire.

URBS TRIUMPHANS

“The Genius of that city is not dead.”

I WOKE in sunlight, young and warm;
And vowed to give my dream a form.
I clove the cliff, I raised the stone,
With Orphic music of mine own,
Till soon the inviolable thought
To portico and palm was wrought.—
A marble city of the free,
With gardens at the western sea!
I made a house with lighted crypts
For mysteries and manuscripts;

Sonnets and Poems

I carved a stair to galleries,
And gave all men the brazen keys;
I gave to Seer and Sayer halls
With ancient wisdom on the walls;
I stored a Doric vault with gold,
As measure just for bought and sold;
I filled for watch and ward a dome
With civic lore of Athens, Rome;
I struck the lyre with unbound hair;
I fostered rites of praise and prayer.
And East across her mountains brought
Devices of her sturdy thought,
From rattling loom a flag with stars;
From flaming forges scimitars;
And West from island shore to this
Sent quaint perfumes and artifice,
In bamboo dwellings multiplied
By white-robed Buddhists almond-eyed.

But ere the morning moon's eclipse
In seas, beyond the homing ships,
Earth smote my beauty, and my towers
In flame were withered with my flowers;
And o'er the dread reverberations
Red rose the silent sun of nations.
Then kings on far pavilioned slopes
In starlight asked new horoscopes;
Then sullen priests, with hand to eyes,
Muttered the Sibyl's old replies;
Then islands and dominions proud
In litanies of terror prayed;
And hid within the fiery cloud,
I only was the Unaafraid.

Sonnets and Poems

Could earth be one with my desire ?
Earth, sprung from zones of solar fire!
She plants a vale with fern and tree,
And sinks it down the sunless sea;
She hangs the crags with vine and branch,
And shatters with the avalanche;
She wreathes her brow, she rends her breast;
She knows no worst, she seeks no best.
She claimed the form, but the design
Was, is, and is forever mine!

Behold in Java and Ceylon
The silent ages slumber on.
Their jungles, where the tiger crawls
By sultry moonlit waterfalls,
Hide ruined palaces and halls —
Huge cities, dim, grotesque, and damp,
Where ebon door and ivory lamp
Had mocked the lightning and the rain
Ere Tyrian trader coasted Spain.
They perished by their soma bowls;
They left no hieroglyphs or scrolls;
Their names are lost, and legends tell
The earthquake smote them and they fell.

But in my larger towers to be
The bells will shout with brazen lips
To cities over land and sea
A jubilant apocalypse!
And o'er my gates shall stand the line,
By my imperial decree:
*“I am a Symbol and a Sign,
A Witness and a Prophecy.”*

Sonnets and Poems

UPLAND LIGHTS

(Mount Aery.)

HASTE, courtier, from ancestral halls,
Where hang the shields of ancient knights;
Haste, ere the snow on Aery falls,
And come to us at Upland Lights.

The pines lie thick atop the hill,
And by their margin on the slope,
Where old-world winds are blowing still,
We've built to west our house of hope.

Haste, courtier, up the greenwood trail,
When moons are full and cool the nights;
And sleep with us while sink the pale
Autumnal stars o'er Upland Lights.

Then rouse with us, carouse with us
At morn in spiritual mirth,
While the gray mists diaphanous
Half hide and half reveal the earth.

For over them, as o'er calm seas,
The sun shall strike; and as they break;
We mark the nearer rocks and trees,
And then the valley, then the lake,

And then far off the mountain chain,
So blue against the long blue sky;
And, like ship's watchmen on the main,
We drink the world with open eye.

Sonnets and Poems

And, courtier, if thou ailing be
With secret grudge or silent woe,
Wait thro' our afternoon, and see
At Upland Lights the afterglow;

See o'er those violet peaks the belts
Of lilac, lavender, and green,
How each to other softly melts,
Or fades with crimson streaks between;

See, tier o'er tier, the gold clouds strew
Their vast and flaming arc above,
While just beneath, in skies still blue,
A white star shines, the star of love.

And if the king decree a march,
A siege, or silver tribute-fee,
A pageant or triumphal arch,
What matters? — let the king decree.

THE PHANTOM CHILD

WHERE'ER I go, in flowers or snow,
In spring or winter tide,
Thro' cities builded long ago,
O'er prairies waste and wide,
A sweet, a wild, a phantom child
Goes ever at my side.

The sunlight in her hair that lies
Seems borne from o'er the sea,
There is a token in her eyes
Of skies that used to be
(The violet dyes of summer skies);
When she looks up at me.

Sonnets and Poems

She laughs as one untouched by fears,
She laughs and takes my hand,
She wanders with me thro' the years
And on from land to land,
But yet she cannot see my tears,
Nor would she understand.

She takes my hand; she sees me still
The laughing lad of old,
She thinks we wander on the hill
In plots of white and gold,
She stops to hear the whippoorwill
In woodlands dusk and cold.

And tho' I know our hills are far
And oceans ebb and flow,
I have no music, mirth, nor star
Whose grace I cherish so—
A memory that no sin can mar
Nor sorrow overthrow.

THE POET IN THE CITY

THE mornings sweep with gust and snow
Round tower and bridge and sordid halls;
And cold the yellow evenings glow
Behind the city's somber walls.

And day by day, with dreams unsaid;
And fiery hope that will not die,
We toil anew for daily bread,
My still unconquered soul and I.

Sonnets and Poems

Our sunbright peaks are lost; we see
No more the midland rivers flow;
The echoes of our mountain glee
Became a memory long ago.

For us no more the good ship lifts
Its bounding prows in midsea day;
Its smoke on blue horizons drifts,
Somewhere in ocean far away.

But the swift songs we may not sing
(That comrade scarce would mark if sung);
Like winds of an eternal spring
Still sound for us and keep us young.

And still we boast our mountain birth;
Our hardy nurture on the sea,
Which give us, as the lords of earth;
The strength to labor and be free.

EPILOGUE

*I sang (remembering how the free winds blow)
Mount, sea, and fire, and earth's resplendent days,
Vernal horizons and autumnal haze,
And moonlit cities in the midnight snow,
And found (mid griefs that met me on my ways)
Joy in the passion, pageantry, and show.*

*I sang (remembering how the stars abide)
Strong hands, and feet, and eyes uplifted still,
Resurgent hope, indomitable will,
And man who liveth, when his gods have died,
And found in singing (whatsoe'er my skill)
Joy in the grandeur of his strength and pride.*

*But the World-Spirit of the East and West,
That shapes the Seen and guides Life's ebb and flow,
The Loving-Kindness, named so long ago,
The Everlasting Arms, the Mother-breast,
I scarce have known and I may never know —
And after joy, I crave the gift of rest.*

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